

S E R M O N,

PREACHED AT THE

O R D I N A T I O N

O F T H E

R E V. W A R D C O T T O N,

T O T H E

P A S T O R A L C A R E

O F T H E

F I R S T C H U R C H A N D S O C I E T Y

I N

B O Y L S T O N,

J U N E 6, 1797.

CHANDLER ROBBINS, D.D.
PASTOR OF A CHURCH IN PLYMOUTH.

PRINTED AT WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS,

AT THE PRESS OF
I S A I A H T H O M A S,

By LEONARD WORCESTER, for said THOMAS.

1797.



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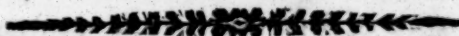
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AN

ORDINATION SERMON.



LUKE ix. 60.

But go thou and preach the kingdom of god.



AND a glorious and delightful, as well as honorable employment it must be, to one, whose mind is properly impressed with the nature and importance of this work ; which caused an eminent Preacher once to exclaim, " I would not exchange a pulpit for a crown and a diadem." And with good reason too ; for what are all the splendid regalia of Princes, but momentary toys ? And those who wear them, how soon, with all their pomp and power, must they drop into the dust ! While, on the other hand, " they, who turn many to righteousness, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament," and will finally wear " a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

IN

In proportion to the magnitude and importance of this work, an anxious concern must arise in the minds of those employed in it, to understand and be well acquainted with the nature and design of it, that they may discharge their trust with fidelity and comfort.

The passage, which I have now read, may assist us in this important inquiry.

Without entering into a particular consideration of the immediate connection of the words with the preceding context, it is sufficient, for our present purpose, to observe, that they were spoken by our blessed SAVIOUR, to one of his followers, commanding him to devote himself, immediately, to a very important work—a work, of far greater moment, than any worldly concern whatever ; greater than even that of attending the funeral obsequies of a deceased parent. A duty, which, in other circumstances, filial piety would have made indispensable. This is evident, from the words immediately connected with the text. “ Let the dead bury their dead ; *but go thou and preach the kingdom of GOD.*” As if he had said, However commendable and proper a dutiful affection to parents may be, and which ought ever to be cultivated ; and however strongly it may urge a peculiar attention to the last honors that can be paid to their memory ; yet, when this, or any other earthly concern, comes in competition with, or stands in the way of more important duties of religion, and particularly that work to which I now send you, no plea of refusal can be admitted ; you are not to confer, a moment, with flesh and blood ; but apply yourself, without any delay, to the important

portant service, to which I have called you : “ Go thou and *preach the kingdom of GOD.*”

The propriety of the words, as a ground of discourse, on the present solemn occasion, is so apparent, that, without further introduction, I shall attempt to illustrate the following ideas, exhibited in them, and then apply the subject.

I. We shall inquire, what is implied in *preaching the kingdom of GOD.* And,

II. To whom this command is given, or who are the *persons* on whom it is obligatory.

I. What is implied in the phrase, *preaching the kingdom of GOD* ? The expression, undoubtedly, is of the same general import with preaching the gospel ; which, it is well known, is, in the New Testament language, frequently called the *kingdom of GOD.* However, there is scarcely an instance in the Bible, wherein the same general truth is expressed in different terms, but we shall find some new ideas naturally suggested by such a variation of expression, which serve more clearly to illustrate and explain the subject treated of. So, in the present instance, there are some striking and beautiful thoughts, which rise in the mind, from the gospel being denominated the *kingdom of GOD.*

The expression naturally conveys to us the ideas of a *King*, as supreme head of this kingdom—of *subjects*—of *order* and subordination—of *laws* and rules, by which the kingdom is governed—and of that *happiness*, which must result from a just and equal administration of this government, and due obedience to its laws. These things are obviously

ously suggested by that expression in the text, "*the kingdom of GOD*;" and, if kept in view, may serve to illustrate our subject, and show what is chiefly intended by preaching the gospel.

KINGDOMS and KINGS, we are sensible, are terms, which do not, at the present day, convey to us the most grateful ideas. We are apt, and, perhaps, naturally enough too, to connect with these terms, the ideas of tyrants and slaves. This may be the case, when applied to *earthly kingdoms*; but, blessed be GOD, *the kingdom* spoken of in our text is *not of this world*." It is not governed by a corrupt Prince, nor by unequal laws. It is infinitely removed from usurpation and tyranny; for it is founded in righteousness, administered with perfect wisdom and justice, and is calculated to promote the peace, liberty, and happiness, of all its subjects. For it consisteth "in righteousness and peace, and joy in the HOLY GHOST." It is a kingdom, which will outlive all the revolutions of worldly states and empires; it will survive the shocks of time, and even the last general convulsion of nature; and the subjects of this kingdom will finally enjoy the most perfect and unchangeable felicity, in a state, eternally free from wars, confusion and sin; and shall, themselves, reign as Kings and Priests forever."

What a beautiful train of ideas does our text, in this view, afford? Who would not wish to belong to such a kingdom as this? Who would not rejoice in such a KING, and in the thought of the growing glory of his empire? And I may justly add, Who, but must esteem it a high honor and privilege to be employed

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as an ambassador—a herald, to proclaim the honor of this KING, and to persuade his fellow men to become subjects of his peaceful kingdom ; saying, in the words of the *Queen of Sheba* to King Solomon, “ Happy are thy men, and happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and hear thy wisdom.” What a privilege, then, what an honor, does he confer on those, whom he commissions for this work, and to whom he speaks, in the language of the text, “ *Go thou and preach the kingdom of GOD !*”

But, to return from this (if it may be called) digression—We will observe in the *first place*, that to preach the kingdom of God, is to proclaim the universal dominion of the great JEHOVAH ; that the “ LORD GOD omnipotent reigns” as King, and supreme Ruler of the universe. That HE, who created all things, does, in the most wise and perfect manner, govern, dispose and direct all things to the best ends ; guides the motions of all the wheels of nature and providence ; has every event under his absolute control ; so that, under his wise and benevolent administration, we may be satisfied, all the affairs of the universe will be conducted in such a manner, as to advance his own glory, which is the chief end, and also to promote the highest interest and happiness of his universal kingdom, which is the great object of his original design and constant operation.

So entire and universal is the government of this glorious King, that he takes equal cognizance of “ a sparrow that falls to the ground,” and of the overturning

overturning of monarchies, the desolation of armies, and the revolutions of empires ; for " his kingdom ruleth over all."

As these are among the most important truths of Revelation, a preacher of the kingdom of GOD must be very deficient in his duty, and chargeable with a criminal neglect, who does not declare them. Besides, they are truths which greatly concern the comfort of mankind. Take away the consideration of the allgoverning providence of GOD, and you deprive the good man of a principal source of his consolation, under all the confusions, sins and miseries, which take place in the world. A firm persuasion, that " the LORD REIGNETH," is the only solid ground of peace, in the midst of those clouds and darkness, which so often surround us, in this vale of tears.

In the view we have here taken of the *kingdom of GOD*, all created beings are his subjects. Man, therefore, in particular, as soon as he was made, being an *intelligent* creature, became a subject of his moral government, and was under law to GOD. This law is summarily expressed in one word, which is LOVE ; love to GOD and man. Which, being founded in the highest reason, he was bound to pay a strict and perfect obedience to it. Consequently, the transgression of this law, being infinitely unreasonable, justly merited and exposed the transgressor to the penalty of it, which is *death*, and " everlasting destruction from the presence of the LORD, and from the glory of his power."

But mankind have, universally, transgressed this law of GOD's kingdom ; and are, therefore, exposed to the

the punishment denounced in it. How shall they escape or avoid the execution of it? This was a question, which no created being in the universe could solve. This, therefore, gave rise to the interposition of the infinite wisdom and grace of the great KING; and opened a way for the establishment of *another* kingdom, if it may be so called, which, in the divine economy, is properly distinguished by the appellation of the KINGDOM OF GRACE. To the consideration of which, we are now prepared, *secondly*, to proceed.—And,

(1.) Of *this kingdom*, it is *primarily* to be observed, that the LORD JESUS CHRIST is the anointed and constituted *king*. Agreeably to *Psalms* ii. 6. “I have set my KING upon my holy hill of Zion.” In preaching the kingdom of GOD, it is of the first importance, that this truth be held up to view; and that the character of this glorious KING be clearly described, and his office and work frequently insisted on, as set forth in the sacred Oracles.

THERE, we find, that this person is no other than THE SON OF GOD. And yet he is also called THE SON OF MAN. His name is thus variously expressed, undoubtedly, to point out both his *divine* and his *human* natures. For, with respect to the former, it is expressly asserted, “This is the TRUE GOD and eternal life.”* And that he is “over all GOD BLESSED FOREVER.” And yet, so “great is the mystery of godliness,” that this very person, as the scriptures inform us, did, in the fulness of time, become “GOD MANIFEST IN THE FLESH, and dwelt a-

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among

* 1 John v. 20.

mong us." And, therefore, with propriety, he is also called the SON OF MAN.

THIS is the glorious, the illustrious character, whom the FATHER hath anointed and set as "KING, upon his holy hill of Zion;" and, as a mediator, has made him also "*head over* ALL THINGS;" all creatures being subjected to him.

This is the KING whom we are to proclaim in our preaching. One clothed with divine authority, having all power in heaven and earth in his hands. And, at the same time, one who is "meek, having salvation." "A just GOD, and yet a Savior."

But it is necessary farther to observe here, that the character and work of CHRIST, which is the great subject of gospel preaching, comprehends more than merely his *regal* office. In accomplishing the work, for which he came into our world, we are taught, that he sustained a *prophetic* and a *priestly* office, as well as that of a KING. That he was the great *teacher* sent from GOD, to "shew us the Father," and to reveal the only way of acceptance with GOD unto eternal life. That he also "gave his life a *ransom*" for sinners—became "obedient unto death," in the room of guilty men; that he thereby made an atonement, and brought in an everlasting righteousness, which is the only foundation of a sinner's justification before GOD. And that, in consequence of this, "whosoever believeth on him, shall receive forgiveness of sins and obtain everlasting life." Which leads us, in the next place,

(2.) To speak of the SUBJECTS of this kingdom.

It

It is of peculiar importance, in preaching the kingdom of GOD, that the *marks* and characters of these subjects be clearly defined, according to the only unerring standard, the WORD OF GOD. Here we find, they were once, like the rest of mankind, in a state of awful rebellion against their rightful Sovereign—opposed to his laws, character and government—“children of wrath, by nature”—and would have continued in this state, forever, had not the sovereign, free and boundless grace of their offended KING, interposed, to prevent their ruin, by turning their hearts to himself, and, “in the day of his power, making them his willing people.” By this, their *hearts* are won over to an everlasting attachment to their KING, and to his cause and interest; so that it has become dearer to them than their own; yea, than all other interests in the universe.

Indeed, there are many who *profess* to be friends to him, who are *nominally* his subjects, and who cry “LORD, LORD,” and yet are real enemies to him, in heart and practice. So there are, often, traitors to be found in every kingdom and commonwealth among men, who make pretensions to loyalty and patriotism; while they are opposed, in their hearts, to the government they are under. These traitors are, sometimes, though not always, detected, and meet the just vengeance of the state. So it will be, finally, with all the pretended friends, but real enemies, of CHRIST’S KINGDOM.

His true subjects are essentially distinguished from these, by *this* mark, that they are, in *heart* and *life*,

life, as well as in profession, friends to their KING. They have deliberately and cordially chosen him for their SAVIOR and their LORD ; and make it the great business of their lives to serve and obey him. And this brings me to observe,

(3.) That *to preach the kingdom of god*, it is of special importance to proclaim the LAWS and regulations of this kingdom. No community or state can subsist long, with any tolerable degree of order and happiness, without *laws* and *rules*, by which they must be governed. Indeed, there are errors and imperfections to be found in all human governments and laws. But, not so, with respect to those of *this kingdom*. These are all absolutely perfect ; calculated to promote the greatest happiness of the kingdom, and of all its subjects ; for they are all “ holy, just and good.”

It is true, that, according to these laws, the enemies of this kingdom are to be punished with great and awful severity. The threatenings denounced against rebellion, are very pointed, and exceedingly terrible. Their language is, “ He that believeth not, shall be damned.” “ Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” And, “ The wrath of god is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.” But, terrible as these threatenings are, they are no more than proportioned to the crime against which they are pointed ; and will, therefore, be cordially approved of, by all the real friends and subjects of the kingdom, as just and righteous. Indeed, they all flow from infinite wisdom

dom and goodness; and are necessary to preserve order in the kingdom, to secure the honor and dignity of the divine government, and to promote the highest interest and happiness of its subjects.

Thus does it appear, that, in *preaching the kingdom of GOD*, it is of great importance to inculcate the *laws and regulations* by which its subjects are to be governed, and to which they all owe a willing obedience and subjection. Once more,

(4.) The peculiar PRIVILEGES, belonging to this kingdom, are, by no means, to be passed over in silence. These are such as become the character of the great Head of the kingdom to confer; and such as might naturally be expected from a being so perfect, so infinitely wise and benevolent. FREE PARDON of all their former rebellion—reception into *his favor* and family—*protection* from their enemies—constant *provision* for their support and comfort—peculiar *tokens of his love and care*—divine aids under all their trials here—special *consolation* and support, in the *hour of death*—a final deliverance from all *sin*, and *suffering*—admittance into his *immediate presence*, and to the full enjoyment of *perfect felicity* in his everlasting kingdom hereafter.

These are the honors and PRIVILEGES, which belong to, and will be conferred upon, all the loyal and happy subjects of the kingdom of GOD, and which, they who preach it, are bound to proclaim.

Having thus considered what is implied in the command in the text, we proceed, briefly, to show, as was proposed,

II. To

II. To WHOM this command is given, "*Go thou and preach the kingdom of GOD.*" To this important question, the inspired oracles afford a full, clear and ready answer. The wisdom of GOD has not left this point involved in such uncertainty, as to make it impossible, or even difficult, to ascertain it. It is an object of too great importance, to be left to the wisdom or to the will and humor of men. The KING of Zion has clearly pointed out the character and qualifications of those, whom he sends upon this important business. And they are described by the following marks.

First, MEN OF KNOWLEDGE. For ignorance, especially of the great system of doctrines in divine Revelation, and those other branches of science, which are necessary to enable the preacher to explain, rightly divide and defend those doctrines, totally disqualifies a person for this work. A *Novice*, i. e. one rude, ignorant and unlearned, is expressly forbidden to enter upon the work of preaching the gospel. It is an arduous employment, and requires a great deal of labor and exertion of the head, heart and hands, to discharge it with fidelity. Close and diligent application to reading, meditation and prayer; above all, a constant and prayerful attention to, and study of the holy Scriptures; for it is from this source that "the man of God is to be thoroughly furnished for his work."

Nor is it sufficient that he be possessed of a doctrinal, or merely speculative knowledge of divine truths;

truths ; he must have an EXPERIMENTAL acquaintance with them ; having felt the power and efficacy of them upon his own soul, as well as experienced the consolations of the gospel. There certainly appears to be something more than an absurdity in a person's being employed to promote the honor and interest of a kingdom or society, who is, at heart, *an enemy*, and utterly opposed to that kingdom. What must naturally be expected as the consequence, in this case ; but that he will, when opportunity presents, act agreeably to his real character, and betray its dearest interests into the hands of its enemies ? No proposition, surely, can be more rational, no truth more important, than this, that they who *preach the kingdom of god*, ought to be firm and cordial friends to this kingdom, and to prefer its interest " above their chief joy."

ANOTHER mark by which the gospel preacher is described, is, a READINESS AND FACILITY OF COMMUNICATION. It is expressly required, that they be "*apt to teach.*" A man may be possessed of a good understanding, of many acquired accomplishments, and of undoubted piety and goodness ; and yet be wholly deficient in this point ; not having a faculty of communicating what he does know, with that perspicuity and ease, which are necessary to render him a useful preacher, and " a workman that need not be ashamed."

TO THESE, must be added, an EVIDENT CALL OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE, by such concurring circumstances, as clearly show it to be the will of CHRIST, that

that the person qualified, should enter upon this work. Such as *harmony*, and a good degree if not an entire unanimity, among the people with whom he is called to labor; a prospect of a *reasonable* and *comfortable support* among them; and such appearances, in other respects, as render it hopeful, that he may prove a useful Minister in his day, and not labor in vain, or spend his strength for nought.— But we pass to the

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of the subject; which would naturally suggest a great variety of remarks. A few of them, only, will be just hinted at; and we shall close with those reflections, which are more immediately pertinent to the present occasion.

The subject leads us to reflect, what cause of thankfulness have we, that the *kingdom of god*, which is a kingdom of *grace*, has been erected in this fallen world! No such blessing was ever indulged the apostate angels. Upon their rebellion, they were doomed to endless woe, without hope of relief. But to fallen *man*, god has proclaimed a free pardon to all those, who shall repent, submit, and return to their allegiance.

How sad, then, is the reflection, that there should be so many among mankind, who turn a deaf ear to these gracious offers from their offended Sovereign; and obstinately refuse a cordial subjection to him, and how righteously might such be left of god to receive the punishment so justly due to their rebellion!

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But, amidst all the ingratitude, infidelity and wickedness, that prevail at this day, in the gospel world, our subject still affords a joyful prospect, to all the benevolent friends of Zion, of the future great increase and advancement of *this kingdom*, in the latter day glory ; and the present aspect of providence, compared with the word of GOD, gives no small ground to believe, that period is fast approaching ; when universal peace and love shall reign on earth ; when wars shall cease, and “ all shall know the LORD, from the greatest to the least.”

How earnest should christians be in prayer, and what great encouragement have they, to “ continue instant” in it, for this happy event.

Furthermore, the preceding subject affords a just and scriptural criterion, by which to determine who is the faithful *Preacher of the kingdom of GOD*. He is one, who has a cordial friendship, a supreme love to JESUS CHRIST, the great Head of this kingdom.

He will, therefore, endeavor clearly to explain and hold up to view, his true character, as set forth in the word of GOD ; as the brightness of the FATHER'S glory and the express image of his person. “ As Immanuel, GOD with us :” To whom are ascribed divine honors ; and who, of right, claims divine prerogatives ; which consideration alone could give such dignity to his character and work, as to render him capable of making a sufficient atonement for sin, and bringing in everlasting righteousness.

He will, also, with great earnestness, preach and inculcate upon his hearers, the LAWS of Christ's
C kingdom ;

kingdom ; and that a uniform, conscientious obedience to them, is the only evidence of real love to CHRIST and his kingdom. On which ground, he will “ affirm constantly, that they who *believe*, be careful to maintain *good works*.” And that, “ by their *fruits* we are to know” who are, and who are not, the friends of GOD.

It is seasonable, further, to remark, that our subject presents the most powerful motives to ministerial faithfulness, that can be conceived of. The honor of the great GOD—the precious cause and interest of our divine REDEEMER—our own peace and comfort—and the everlasting salvation of our fellow sinners, are all, most intimately, concerned in our fidelity in this work. How frequently, then, my *brethren*, should we examine our views and conduct, and call ourselves to an account, how we have discharged our duty ; whether we have preached the pure, unadulterated gospel of JESUS CHRIST ; not temporizing, to please the corrupt humors of men ; but boldly and faithfully declaring the whole counsel of GOD, that we may be “ pure from the blood of all men !”

But, on this solemn occasion, how must the mind of our *younger brother* be impressed with the most serious concern, who is, this day, to be separated to the great and important work of *preaching the kingdom of GOD* !

In the view, SIR, of the vast importance of this work, as it stands connected with everlasting consequences, to yourself and your hearers ; and under a
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sense of your own weakness and inability, is not your heart ready to tremble at the prospect before you ; and to exclaim, in the language of the apostle, "*Who is sufficient for these things ?*" The work indeed is great and arduous ; and the responsibility, which is attached to it, is, in a peculiar manner, a consideration, which adds amazing weight to the employment ; as you are to " watch for souls, as one who must give an account." You will naturally reflect upon that solemn passage in the word of GOD, which declares, that if any souls should finally perish, through the watchman's neglect or unfaithfulness, *their blood will be required at the watchman's hand.* But be not discouraged, brother. Your work is with the LORD. If you are faithful in his service, and make it the great aim of your ministerial labors to win souls to CHRIST, and to advance his kingdom in the world ; though you should not have the happiness to be so successful as you may desire ; yet, you will be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, even " though Israel should not be gathered ;" and will be " a sweet favor to GOD, both in them that perish, and in them that are saved."

Hear, then, the voice of your Master, saying to you, this day, "*Go thou and preach the kingdom of GOD ;*" and, for your encouragement, hear him also saying, if you are obedient to his command, " LO, I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS, EVEN TO THE END." If you have *his* presence, you have enough. And remember, also, that, " without HIM, you can do nothing."

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We wish you a divine blessing in this great undertaking ; and that you may be a wise, and successful laborer in the vineyard of our LORD ; be instrumental in turning many to righteousness, and, at last, shine as a distinguished star forever, in the kingdom of GOD.

THE FLOCK OF CHRIST, in this place, we cordially congratulate, upon this occasion. We rejoice with them, that after the late frown of Divine Providence, in the sorrowful removal of their late beloved pastor by death, whose labors they enjoyed for so very short a season ; that the great Head of the Church has disposed their hearts to unite in the choice of another, who, we sincerely hope, will be made a rich and lasting blessing to them and their children. Receive him, *brethren*, in the LORD ; and esteem him highly in love, for his work's sake. Encourage his heart, and strengthen his hands, by a diligent attendance on his administrations ; and by all those acts of kindness and love, which are justly required and expected from your mutual relation to each other. Above all, " *brethren*, pray for him," that he may be taught of GOD, that so he may be able to teach you. That he may win many souls among you to JESUS CHRIST ; and may he who sows, and they who reap, at last meet together, and rejoice forever, in the kingdom of GOD.

To conclude. The foregoing subject, and the thoughts which have been suggested by it, may, with great propriety, be applied to this numerous and solemn assembly ; and ought to excite very serious,
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but different sensations, according to the differing characters in it.

We have, all of us, been educated in a land of gospel privileges, and ordinances ; we have had the *kingdom of GOD preached* to us ; and have been earnestly invited to become subjects of it. What the effect has been, GOD knoweth ; and will shortly call us to a strict and solemn account. By nature, we have all been in a state of rebellion against the glorious King of the universe, and refused to have him to reign over us. Has the rebellion and opposition of our hearts ever been subdued ? We have been invited, yea, entreated, to be reconciled to GOD ; to come into, and partake of the rich and everlasting blessings of his kingdom ; and we are still the subjects of these gracious calls. If we have obeyed them, and have complied with the offers of mercy, happy are we indeed ; happy in the favor and protection of our KING and SAVIOR, while in this world ; and hereafter we shall see his face in peace, and shall live and reign with him forever in glory.

But if, notwithstanding all the means of grace and the peculiar advantages we have enjoyed, any of us continue rebels to GOD, and refuse subjection to JESUS CHRIST as our SAVIOR and LORD ; awful, indeed, and unspeakably hazardous, is our situation, It will be more tolerable for the heathen, in the day of judgment, than for us. It becomes all such, therefore, to realize their true and sorrowful condition ; immediately to renounce their rebellion, and fly to the mercy seat, while it is "*an accepted time,*
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and a *day of salvation*." Otherwise, the KINGDOM OF GOD, will, in a very short time, be preached no more to them ; and their justly offended KING, will rise up in anger, and shut the door of mercy forever against them. Wherefore, " let us hear his gracious voice, today, and not harden our hearts."



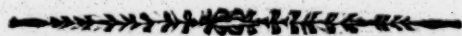
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REV. MR. WHITNEY, OF NORTHBOROUGH.



WE, the Presbytery, hereunto called in the providence of GOD, and in virtue of authority derived from the Founder of Christianity, having solemnly separated and ordained you, Mr. WARD COTTON, (by prayer and the laying on of our hands) to the work of the Gospel Ministry, in general, with authority to preach the word, and administer the ordinances of GOD, *whenever and wherever* you shall be regularly invited thereto ; do, now, declare you to be the special Bishop and Overseer of the first Christian Church and Society in Boylston.

As you are set apart to this sacred employment, let me stir up your pure mind, by way of remembrance of the duties of your high and holy calling.

Accordingly, I, who am an elder, (as thou also now art,) exhort you, before GOD, and the LORD JESUS CHRIST, (who shall judge the quick and the dead
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at his second appearing in the glory of the Father,) that you take heed to the ministry you have received in the LORD, to fulfil it.

Take heed, therefore, unto yourself, and unto all the flock, of which the HOLY GHOST hath made you an overseer, to feed the Church of CHRIST, which he has purchased with his own blood. You will consider this flock as your peculiar charge ; to their service you will, then, devote your time, and every talent the GOD of nature or grace has bestowed upon you. While this people support you, “ necessity is laid upon you, and wo be unto you, if you preach not the gospel.”

Preach the word ; GOD’S word ; not as many, who corrupt it with human inventions, mixtures, or additions.

“ Take heed unto your doctrine,” what you teach and preach. Feed this flock with the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby, up to the measure of the stature of the fulness of CHRIST.

The holy scriptures are committed to you as a *sacred depositum* : These you are to open and explain ; and teach or preach nothing but what is clearly contained therein, or may be fairly and evidently deduced therefrom. As an ambassador from the Prince of Peace, your instructions are all laid before you in the Bible. “ All scripture is given by inspiration of GOD, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness ; that the *man of GOD*, the Christian Minister, may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

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The Bible, then, you will make your chief study, that you may rightly understand that, and preach it faithfully to your hearers ; not following cunningly devised fables, which, as an *ignis fatuus*, only mislead. You are set for the defence of the gospel, against all who would oppose or corrupt it. In this age of infidelity, when some, professing themselves wise, become fools, and employ their wit, not reason, to decry the wisdom of god, it is particularly important, *that*, from a thorough examination of all the evidences of Christianity, you endeavor to be well grounded, rooted, and settled in the faith ; whereby you will be the better able to confirm and establish the faith of others ; and by clear reasoning to convince gainfayers, and to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.

I shall not take upon me to tell you *what* to preach in particular. I claim not *infallibility*, nor any dominion over your faith. I know not any right I have, authoritatively to enjoin on you to teach and preach according to my *Creed*, or agreeable to my system of divinity. It is your right, nay more, as you will answer it to god, it is your duty, to examine and think for yourself, and to preach what, after painful and prayerful inquiry, appears to you to be the truth as it is in JESUS, " calling no man Master upon earth. One is your Master, even CHRIST. And to your own Master you must stand or fall." In the sermons of our LORD, and of his Apostles, you have eminent patterns of gospel preaching.

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You will frequently advert to that solemn appeal, which St. Paul made to men, respecting the *matter* and the *manner* of his preaching, and his fidelity in the discharge of the duties of his sacred embassy ; and, in imitation of so bright an example, “ keep back nothing which may be profitable to your hearers, nor shun to declare the whole counsel of God ; testifying, to all, repentance towards GOD, and faith towards our LORD JESUS CHRIST. And suffer none of the trials you meet with to move you, neither count your life dear unto yourself, so that you may finish your course with joy, and the ministry you have received of the LORD JESUS, to testify the gospel of the grace of GOD.” Study to shew yourself approved unto GOD, a workman who needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth ; and, as a faithful and wise steward in the house of GOD, give to every one his portion of meat in due season ; feeding the lambs, as well as the sheep of the flock ; not assuming dominion over their faith, but striving to be a helper of their joy. Be instant in season, and out of season ; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all authority, and with all long suffering and doctrine ; teaching every man, and warning every man, that, if possible, you may present every man perfect in CHRIST JESUS.

You will urge mankind to a seasonable and diligent use of the means of grace ; but, cautious of attributing the salvation of man to outward means, solely, and knowing that, in bringing sinners to final happiness, you are a laborer together with GOD, you will

will never cease to pray for this people, that the energy of GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT may ever accompany all your sacred ministrations ; and render them effectual means of convincing and converting sinners ; and of building them up in holiness and comfort, through faith, unto salvation ; pressing it upon them to be working out their own salvation, with fear and trembling, while GOD, by the efficacious influences of his SPIRIT, is working in them, to will and to do of his own good pleasure.

“ Take heed,” also, unto the *manner* of your preaching. Having your mind deeply impressed with the sense and weight of eternal concerns ; and feeling a joint personal interest in the great truths you preach to others, you will speak as becomes the oracles of GOD ; not with those theatrical airs and gestures, which, however they may besit a school-boy, or a youth just completing his academical studies, by no means become the sacred desk, nor him who is speaking, in the name of GOD, to sinful men : But with that gravity and solemnity, that earnestness and pathos, which the reference of these things to men's final state will generate and inspire. And never attempt to supply the want of matter, by the mere graces of composition, or to court the temporary applause of the ignorant, instead of the lasting approbation of the deserving.

“ Take heed unto yourself,” as well as to your doctrine and manner of preaching. Endeavor to make yourself master of your business. Stir up the gifts you are possessed of. Give attendance to reading,

ing, meditation and prayer, that your advances in ministerial furniture may appear to all. "Take heed unto yourself," to the state and welfare of your own soul, lest, after having preached to others, you should be a castaway.

"Take heed unto yourself," how you live and behave in the world. Give no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed. Be wise as a serpent, and harmless as a dove. Let no man despise you; but, by dignity and propriety of conduct, magnify your office; and be thou an example to all, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity; in all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works.

As you are brought near to GOD, to do the service of the temple of the LORD, and to stand before the Congregation to minister unto them, see that you give no occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme; but let "holiness to the LORD," be written on all your services, and on all your enjoyments.

Take heed how you behave, with respect to your Fathers and Brethren in the Ministry.

You will avoid that lust of Diotrephical preeminence, which some hanker after; and while you wish to be seen and known, among your brethren, according to your age and rank, and according to your station in the church of GOD, you will, as a modest, (a sure sign of a sensible) man, shun those forward, assuming, dictatorial airs, which by no means become the face of youth in the presence of age. Be not found smiting your fellow servants;
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neither play the bishop in other men's parishes ; nor listen to the disaffected therein, from a sordid thirst for popularity, or that you may rise upon the ruins of others, lest you should have occasion to say, " As I have done, so GOD hath requited me."

Administer the ordinances of CHRIST's appointment to the proper subjects thereof ; making a difference between the clean and the unclean. Yet never impose unscriptural terms, for christian communion, upon any. Make not the door of admission into CHRIST's church narrower than he has made it. He, who well knew what was in man, admitted a Judas into his first little church. You will strive to keep up the discipline appointed by CHRIST in his house. Prefer not one before another. Do nothing by partiality.

The powers of ordination belong to you. Whenever, therefore, you are called to separate persons to this work, make a proper use of your power, for the glory of GOD, the interest of religion, the credit and reputation of the Clergy, and the peace, order and unity of the Churches. Lay hands, suddenly, on no man ; neither be partaker of other men's sins.

Introduce not a novice into the ministry, lest, being elated with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil. It is not every fellow who thrusts himself into the pulpit, who is fit for the ministry. You are bound to judge of *their* qualifications, who are called by a people, and offer themselves to this service. The things, therefore, which you have received of us, before all these witnesses, the same com-
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mit you to *faithful* men, who shall be *able* to teach others also ; men of good abilities, fair moral characters, and blameless lives.

In a word ; endure afflictions as a good soldier of JESUS CHRIST ; for these, if your life is spared, you must expect to meet with. “ The servant is not above his master ; neither he who is sent, above him who sent him.”

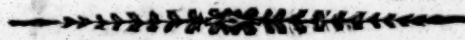
Finally ; remember you watch for souls, as one who must give an account. You are this day entering on your labors. How soon you may be called to give account of your stewardship, is known only to him who sends you forth to labor. You will bear in mind the short course allotted to that worthy young man, your immediate predecessor ; and let it be a memento to you, to “ work the works of him, who sends you into his vineyard, while it is day ; the night cometh when no man can work.” And, now, we say to you, dear Sir, if you keep this commandment, unrebukable, and are found faithfully discharging the duties of your office, whether your term be long or short, and though this Israel be not all gathered, as you could wish ; yet you shall be glorious in the eyes of the LORD ; and when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, you shall receive, from his hands, a crown of life, which shall never fade away. So help you, GOD.



THE
RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP,

BY THE

REV. AARON BANCROFT, OF WORCESTER.



CHRISTIANITY is the consummation of divine goodness. The spirit of the gospel is love and candor : Its general tendency is to rectify every dissocial affection in its disciples ; to refine the human character, and to promote the happiness of man through all his relations. Peace on earth and good will to men were proclaimed by the celestial Harbingers of the birth of its Divine Author. But the nature of the gospel has often been misunderstood, and its benevolent intentions have been perverted. The professed disciples of JESUS CHRIST have often exercised tyranny over the consciences of their fellow beings, and supported their usurpations by every act of cruelty. Where the power of persecution has been denied—blind attachment to system—zeal for points of doubtful speculation, have often stifled the amiable principles of our religion, and excited passionate disputes and inveterate parties among Christians. The intemperate cry for Paul, Cephas
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and Apollos, has taken the place of love, candor and meekness. From these errors, we may all take lessons of moderation.

Our civil government makes no distinction between different denominations of Christians. It is for us, individually, to carry into full effect the charitable spirit of our religion. We cannot suppose, that God has suspended the rewards of immortality upon those conditions, on which the genius of superstition makes them to depend ; abstract speculations and ceremonial rites. Piety and virtue may, doubtless, subsist, amidst a variety of opinions and a diversity of forms. We ought not to require that, at a *term of communion*, which God does not require as a *condition of salvation*. The scriptures are an infallible rule to all christians ; but the wisest and the best of men may err in its application : Our charity therefore may be extended to all, who consistently support the christian character. In this way, we shall promote unity of spirit in the bond of peace.

Under these impressions, Dear Sir, in the name and by the appointment of the Council present, I give you the Right Hand of Fellowship. We acknowledge you our equal ; possessed of all the privileges of a Christian Bishop. We presume not to exercise dominion over your faith ; but we wish to be the helpers of your joy. By this sacred pledge, we allow your right of private judgment, and promise a corresponding practice. We proffer you our friendship in the walks of private life, and our advice and assistance

assistance in the business of your probation. In every suitable way, we engage to cooperate with you, in the promotion of a kingdom of righteousness, peace and joy. From you, we expect the like offices of friendship, advice and assistance.

GOD ALMIGHTY bless thee, my Brother. May he grant clearness to thine understanding and improvement to thy studies ; may he add length to thy life and lustre to thine example ; success to thy ministerial labors, and to thy fidelity the crown of glory.

The Christian Church and Society in this place will accept our congratulation on the events of this day. With you we have noticed the dispensations of Providence, in the repeated and quick removal of your ministers : With you we mourned the early death of your late Pastor. We applaud your spirited exertions in support of the public institutions of the gospel : We rejoice at the unanimity and order which have attended the choice and induction of your present Minister. He relies on your friendship, your candor and support. We are persuaded, you will, by a serious attendance on his ministry, encourage his heart, and strengthen his hands. Your own salvation, and the happiness of your children, urge this duty upon you. The state of society with us, renders the attention to the public worship and instruction of the Sabbath highly important. The increasing wealth of our country opens daily new channels of luxury and dissipation. Arguments of general scepticism are placed before the public in their most engaging forms. Every seducing specu-

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lation finds an emission from the pre. The friends of mankind must wish to counteract this excess of liberty, by useful information and religious impressions ; by habits of sober reflection and good practice. No methods can be conceived better calculated to impress the unexperienced mind with a sense of moral obligation, to enforce the laws of religion on conscience, and to furnish armor of defence against the seductions of a wicked world, than the public institutions of Christianity. By the regular attendance of yourselves and your families at the Altar of DEITY may you expect, that energy will be given to your private instruction and example. Your Minister will rise up and make a good report of you ; your children, and call you blessed.

May the GOD of peace and love delight to dwell with and to bless you.

When JESUS shall a second time appear, may you, your Pastor, and all to whom he shall minister, with HIM, enter into the joys of Heaven.

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